

Heroes on the Water and Picatinny Hosts Veterans Group

(Article submitted by C Kunkel-FMWR)

https://www.facebook.com/HeroesOnTheWaterNewJerseyChapter#!/HeroesOnTheWaterNewJerseyChapter/photos_stream

On Saturday 11 May a group of dedicated volunteers from an organization called "Heroes on the Water" along with support from Picatinny's FMWR staff offered a day of Kayak fishing to 10 veterans from the Lyons Veterans Hospital.

Heroes on the Water (HOW) is a therapeutic kayak fishing rehabilitation and reintegration program dedicated to the physical and emotional rehabilitation of disabled active duty personnel and veterans. In the fulfillment of this mission, HOW works with active duty personnel and veterans in military hospitals, Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals, Army Warrior Transition Units (WTU's), and Marine Wounded Warrior Regiment (WWR) across the Nation.

HOW is a nationally recognized non-profit organization that takes wounded warriors kayak fishing. Last year the NJ Chapter hosted several successful events for wounded veterans in both salt and fresh water locations. This year they were trying to find less pressured and more private water body to provide a better experience for the veterans. Their events typically have 10-15 wounded veterans (many from Lyons VA hospital) with approximately 10-20 HOW volunteers. They supply everything; kayaks, rod/reels, tackle, pfd's (worn at all times), on water instruction, lunch, and everything for a great day on the water. They also provide safety training, kayak & fishing training and pair the veterans up with guides while out on the water.

HOW activities are closely coordinated with military and hospital staff and all services are provided without cost. HOW programs include active duty, reservist, guard and veterans of all conflicts, and disabilities of all types. HOW lets appropriate staff determine who can participate in our programs. HOW also works to identify individual veterans who have been discharged and are back at home, in order to make the benefits of the program available to them.

For many of the participants, the program may be their only form of recreation. The goal is to provide services to all disabled active duty personnel and veterans, at no cost to them. Ensuring their participation helps participants achieve progress in their rehabilitation and reintegrate into society.

It was awesome to see those who don't regularly show emotion to broadly smile when they capture their first pickerel or bass. It was a very successful day and many asked if they may return to Picatinny to catch (and release) the one's that got away.

Below is a post from their Facebook page:

On his way to our event today here is what NJ volunteer Jon Mueller wrote, no further words are needed:

"I'm off to meet someone I've never met before. He's seen horrific things and has been through unimaginable situations. He bears the weight of these things as they haunt him day after day. We will meet about an hour from now. He'll be skeptical, withdrawn. He's this way because he sacrificed for all of us. He's one of our many war heroes. But I'm taking him kayak fishing. I get to take him out on the water and watch him transform. The withdrawn look will turn to a smile. His skepticism to laughter. And, even if only for one day, he will be relaxed and thoroughly enjoy life again."